



***Culture in our Classrooms*** has so far suggested a series of classroom activities to be used individually or in multiple combinations. Let us now assume a wider professional perspective in pursuit of a greater cultural and interpersonal flexibility.

In your teaching career, the rainbow of your students may change over time. New students will leave their own countries and move on, into your classrooms. In Italy, for example, teachers can have classes which include Albanians, Moroccans, Senegalese and other students from West Africa. Of course, these groups could change again in the future, following new demographic patterns.

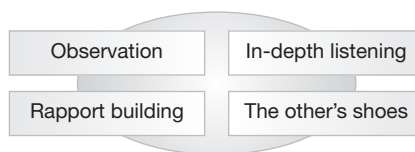
And your own teaching career may require you to move on, to pastures and countries new. Here, then, are our questions:

- What can you do to help your *students*, who have just entered the strange and perhaps scary place which is your native country?
- What can you do to make these transitions easier for *yourselves*, working in a new environment where the rules are different?

### **Moving on**

We would like to offer you some ideas to get to grips with new cultures, particularly from a Teacher Developmental perspective – suggesting four major skill areas that can be ‘exercised’.

Fundamental to all such exercises is the Rogerian precept that successful teachers will feel and show unconditional positive regard for their students. By this, we mean that they truly value the people in their classes, and show this respect even if the



behaviour the students exhibit is challenging to the teacher’s cultural norms. The problem here is the ‘unconditional’ part, usually only granted, as a matter of course, to young children by their parents. When we work with older children or adults, this is much harder to achieve. Sometimes we have found that the best thing we can do in a new cultural situation is to *stop* before we *judge*. Suspending judgement gives us the time and space to build rapport and to look at student behaviour in a less negative way – observing and listening, so we can truly hear things from *their* perspective.

We propose 16 practical exercises, which could usefully be done in the safety of staff development sessions. Many teachers, though, do not have the support and luxury of regular Teacher Development workshops. You can, however, team up with other like-minded people – they don’t even need to be teachers from your current school. What is crucial is that you all move on together.

Carl Rogers was one of the founding fathers of humanistic psychology. His book *Freedom to Learn* (Prentice Hall) became a central text for many of us.